

Message Text

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73

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04

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----- 059773

P 030145Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3259

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4213

FOLLOWING MESSAGE SENT FROM BIEN HOA ON 02 APR 74.

ACTION SAIGON IMMEDIATE INFO USDAO SAIGON. REPEATED TO
YOU FOR YOUR ACTION.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 148

E.O. 11653: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJ: SITUATION AT DUC HUE

REF: BIEN HOA 137

1. NVA/VC CONTINUE ARTILLERY AND MORTAR SHELLING AT DUC HUE RANGER
BASE CAMP BUT HAVE NOT RENEWED GROUND ATTACK FOLLOWING UNSUCCESSFUL
ASSAULT MR 27 - 28. SITUATION APPEARS STABILIZED FOR THE MOMENT.
CAMP TOOK 119 ABF ROUNDS ON MAR 30, THREE ON MAR 31, AND 41 ON
APRIL 1. HELICOPTER LANDING ZONE AT BASE CAMP WAS MOVED MAR 31
BECAUSE NVA/VC HAD ZEROED IN ON REGULAR PAD AND WERE DIRECTING
FIRE AT CHOPPERS UPON EACH LANDING. ABF'S ON BASE CAMP HAVE BEEN
FROM 105 ARTILLERY, 107 ROCKETS, AND 82MM MORTARS. EARLIER REPORTS
OF 130MM ARTILLERY FIRED ON DUC HUE PROVED TO BE INCORRECT AND MR 3
HQ IS NOW CARRYING THESE AS 105'S.

2. MR 3 HQ PLACES BADLY MAULED 7TH BATTALION OF E-6 REGIMENT
(WHICH UNSUCCESSFULLY ATTACKED DUC HUE) ON EITHER SIDE OF
CAMBODIAN/VIETNAM BORDER ABOUT 10 KM NORTH OF THE BASE CAMP.

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OTHER ENEMY UNITS IN AREA INCLUDE SMALL K-9 AND K-4 INDEPENDENT

BNS FEW KMS SOUTH OF DUC HUE, THE C-1 LOCAL FORCE CO LOCATED WITH 7TH BN E-6, AND THE E-6 REGT HQ AS WELL AS 5TH NVA DIV HQ NEARBY IN CAMBODIA. CONTINUING ABF'S AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE PLUS PRESENCE OF E-6 REGT HQ AND A DIV FORWARD CP INDICATE PROBABLE PRESENCE IN AREA OF OTHER NVA/VC UNITS.

3. FRIENDLY FORCES INCLUDE 83RD RANGER BATTALION IN THE BASE CAMP, A BATTALION OF THE 46TH REGIMENT AND THE 49TH RECON COMPANY (BOTH FROM 25TH DIV), THREE BATTERIES OF ARTILLERY FROM THE 25TH DIV (TWO OF 105 AND ONE OF 155), AND TWO RF BATTALIONS IN THE GENERAL AREA. FRIENDLY AIR MISSIONS HAVE INCLUDED EIGHT SORTIES OF A-1'S AND 10 SORTIES OF F-5'S ON MAR 30 (NONE REPORTED SINCE) AND SCORES OF CONTINUING COMBAT AND ESCORT MISSIONS BY UH-1H HELO GUNSHIPS. (AC-119 GUNSHIP MISSIONS ARE BEING FLOWN REGULARLY BUT THE AIRCRAFT ARE BASED AT TAN SON NHUT UNDER THE 5TH AIR DIVISION AND MR 3 HAS NO RECORD OF ITS MISSIONS.) SINCE ACTION BEGAN AT DUC HUE VNAF HAS LOST TWO A-1'S AND ONE L-19 AND HAS REPORTED DAMAGE TO FIVE HELOS. ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE, INCLUDING SA-7'S, HAVE BEEN HEAVIEST ENCOUNTERED SINCE CEASE-FIRE OUTSIDE OF COMMUNIST CONTROLLED AREAS. 3RD AIR DIVISION COMMANDER, GEN TINH, REPORTS THAT NVA/VC ARE USING MODIFIED SA-7 WHICH NO LONGER EMITS TELLTALE WHITE SMOKE PUFF UPON BEING FIRED MAKING WEAPON MUCH MORE MENACING THAN BEFORE.

4. MR 3 HAS NO CLEAR IMPRESSION AS TO WHAT NEXT MOVES OF COMMUNISTS MAY BE AT DUC HUE. IN BROADER FRAME OF REFERENCE, CONGEN FORESEES THAT WITH DUC HUE ACTION NVA/VC HAVE OPENED UP A NEW BASE AREA NEAR THE PARROTS BEAK FROM WHICH TO BRING LONG TERM PRESSURE ON THE GVN. OPTIONS OPEN TO COMMUNISTS ARE (A) TO TRY TO CREATE A NEW LEOPARD SPOT ON THE WESTERN BORDER WHICH OVER A LONG PERIOD THEY WOULD TRY TO LINK TO NORTHERN TAY NINH BY ERODING GVN CONTROL IN INTERVENING WESTERN TAY NINH BORDER AREA, OR (B) TRY TO OCCUPY DUC HUE DISTRICT WEST OF VAM CO DONG RIVER WHICH AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY NOTED IS GOOD AGRICULTURAL LAND SPARSELY POPULATED AND LIGHTLY DEFENDED BY GVN, OR (C) TRY TO CUT OFF TAY NINH PROVINCE WITH DRIVES BY NVA 5TH DIV FROM PARROTS BEAK AND NVA 5TH AND/OR 9TH DIV FROM HO BO/XAI LOI WOODS AREA ACROSS NARROW NECK SEPARATING THOSE TWO NVA BASE AREAS. IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCE, PRESSURE FROM THE NVA 5TH IN THE PARROTS BEAK AREA FORCES THE ARVN 25TH DIV TO FACE SOUTWARD AS WELL AS NORTH-CONFIDENTIAL

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WARD IN ITS A/O (HAU NGHIA/TAY NINH) AND STRETCHES GVN FORCES IN MR 3 THINNER THAN BEFORE.

5. AT A MINIMUM, COMMUNIST PRESSURE IN WESTERN HAU NGHIA WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY PRESSURE IN NORTHERN HAU NGHIA ABOVE TRANG BANG AND CU CHI WHICH WE ARE ALREADY SEEING. PRESSURE IN WESTERN MR 3 WILL IN TURN PROBABLY BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN INCREASED SCALE OF ATTACKS IN EASTERN AREAS (PHUOC TUY, LONG KHANH, AND BINH TUY),

WHICH ALSO WE ARE ALREADY SEEING, AIMED AT TRYING TO TIE DOWN THE ARVN 18TH DIV AND OTHER GVN FORCES OTHERWISE AVAILABLE FOR REINFORCEMENT IN THE WESTERN AREAS.

6. WHILE A CONSIDERABLY HIGHER LEVEL OF COMMUNIST MILITARY ACTIVITY CAN THUS BE EXPECTED IN THE NEAR FUTURE, PRESUMABLY AN NVA/VC PARTING SHOT IN THE REMAINING WEEKS OF THE DRY SEASON, WE DO NOT YET SEE DEFINITE SIGNS OF A REGION-WIDE MAJOR OFFENSIVE. IN THE FACE OF STEPPED-UP NVA/VC ACTION, THE MR 3 COMMANDER, LTGEN THUAN REMAINS CONFIDENT. HE IS CONCENTRATING DEFENSIVE FORCES IN WESTERN AND NORTHERN HAU NGHIA TO COPE WITH ANY DETERMINED NVA PUSH IN THAT AREA AND IS CONSIDERING OTHER MEASURES WHOSE OBJECTIVE WOULD BE TO FORCE THE NVA 9TH DIV TO PULL BACK FROM HO BO WOODS AND OTHER SAIGON RIVER CORRIDOR FORWARD POSITIONS INTO WHICH IT HAS RECENTLY MOVED. THUAN RECENTLY COMMENTED PRIVATELY THAT HE RELISHES THIS "CHESS GAME" HE IS NOW PLAYING WITH HIS FORMER ADVERSARY, CHIEF OF THE PRG DEL TO THE TPJMC WHEN THUAN HEADED THE GVN DEL, WHO HE SAYS IS NOW COMMANDING NVA FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM.
PETERS UNQUOTE
MARTIN

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NNN

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